

SOUTHWEST TRANSPORTATION PLANNING REGION



September 10, 2007



Who Are We?

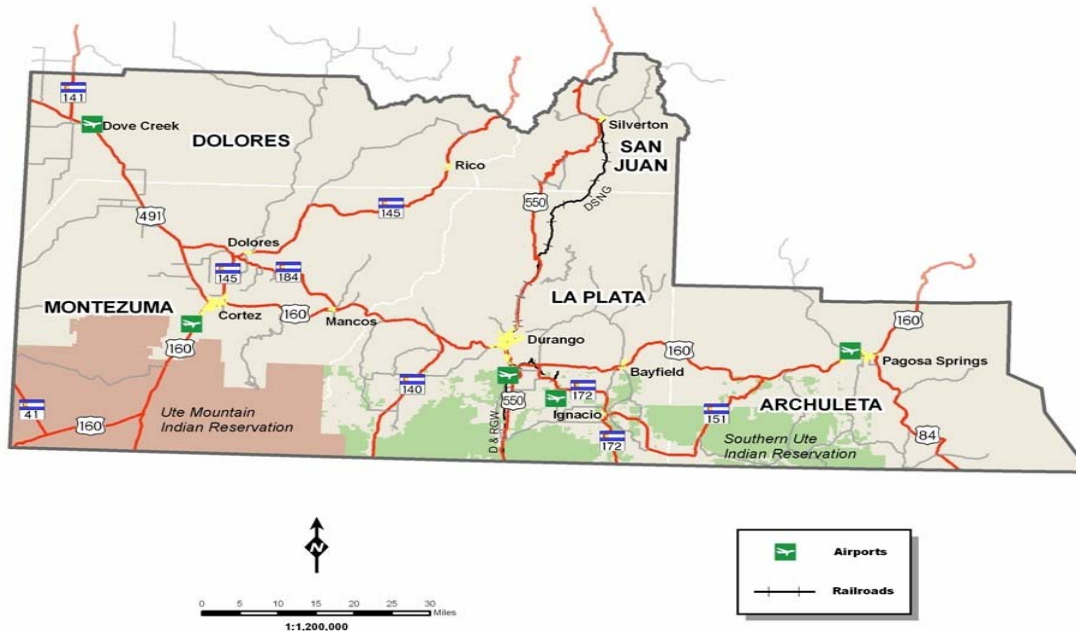
Southwest TPR

Counties:

Dolores
Montezuma
San Juan
La Plata
Archuleta

Indian Reservations:

Ute Mountain Ute
Southern Ute



- **6,557 square miles of land in the SWTPR**
- **1,129 lane miles in the SWTPR**

Southwest Colorado faces some unique challenges.



Dependence on State Highways

- Thousands of trucks transporting goods travel through the SWTPR per day on the way to the Front Range
- State highways are “Main Street” in most towns and are, in many cases, the only form of transport for residents.
- Lack of viable alternatives:
 - No interstate
 - No rail freight service
 - Lack of reliable, competitively-priced air service



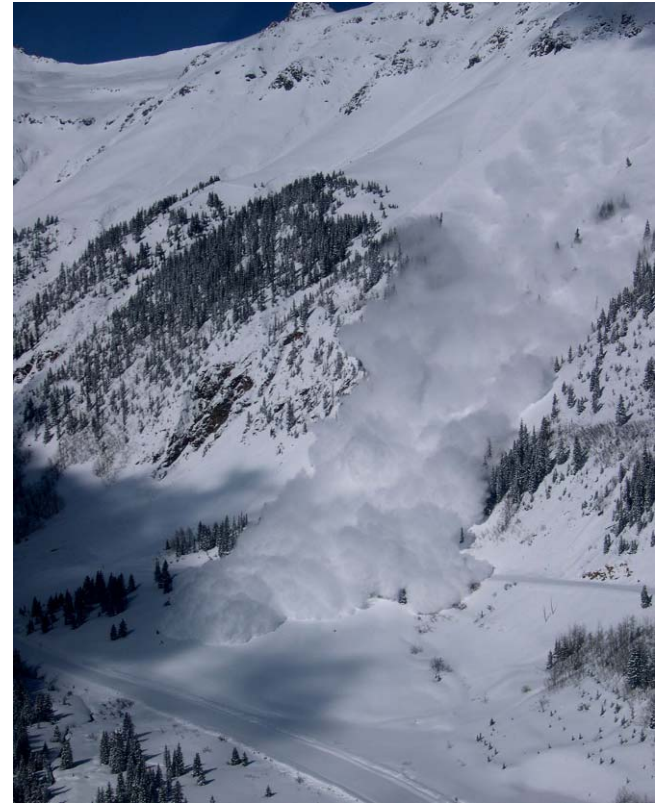
“Big rig” on US 491



Downtown Cortez

Avalanche Country

- US 550 has the highest number of avalanche paths in the U.S. that reach a state highway.
- 5 mountain passes in the SWTPR
- In 2005, 5 mountain passes in southwest Colorado were closed for 3 days, due to avalanches.
- Fatalities have resulted from avalanches on US 550, including 6 on Red Mountain Pass.
- Any reductions in transportation dollars could result in unsafe conditions and road closures.



Eagle Avalanche on US 550,
north of Silverton.

High Rate of Animal/Vehicle Collisions

- Animal/vehicle collisions are the No. 1 cause of accidents in the SWTPR (out of 18 categories), accounting for 27% of all crashes.
- The rate of animal/vehicle collisions is high on US 160, US 550, SH 151, SH 145, and SH 141.
- 7 fatalities have occurred as a result of wildlife/vehicle hits on SWTPR state highways in the past 10 years.
- An animal detection system with driver warning signs is being developed for use on US 160. Deer fencing and underpasses are used in some areas.
- A new funding source would provide for necessary deer and elk fencing, road crossings, and other measures.



Landslides and Rockslides

- Jackson Mountain Slide on US 160, east of Pagosa Springs, is a slow, continuous landslide that requires ongoing maintenance to keep the highway functional.
- Need funding reserves so maintenance and engineering staff can quickly address emergency road repairs.
- Additional funding needed for ongoing rockfall prevention and mitigation measures.



Jackson Mountain slide on US 160



Rockfall on SH 145, near the town of Rico

Increasing Tourist Traffic

- Southwest Colorado is a major tourist destination:
 - Mesa Verde
 - Durango & Silverton Train
 - 3 scenic byways, including San Juan Skyway
 - Durango Mountain Resort Ski Area
 - Bicycling
 - All-season recreation on public lands
- Slow-moving recreational and passenger vehicles and bicycles in towns and on mountain passes
- Need passing lanes/turnouts and wider shoulders for safety and mobility



Traffic queue of commuters and rafting buses in Durango



Iron Horse Bicycle Classic, from Durango to Silverton

Growing Concerns

- Population in the SWTPR estimated to increase 86% by 2035.
- Lack of affordable housing causes congested commutes between Durango and other towns. Need highway commuter corridor improvements and expanded transit routes.
- Coordination needed between CDOT and local governments in considering the effects of increased traffic from development on the transportation system. Assure that development “pays its own way”.
- Oil and gas is a growing industry, and heavy trucks, weighing up to 500,000 pounds, use state highways for transportation.
- Need additional funding to address safety and mobility concerns in congested corridors.



US 160/US 550 intersection in Durango



Oil truck on US 491, south of Cortez

Southwest TPR Needs

- Safety
- Mobility
- Surface treatment
- Need new revenue sources to address these needs.

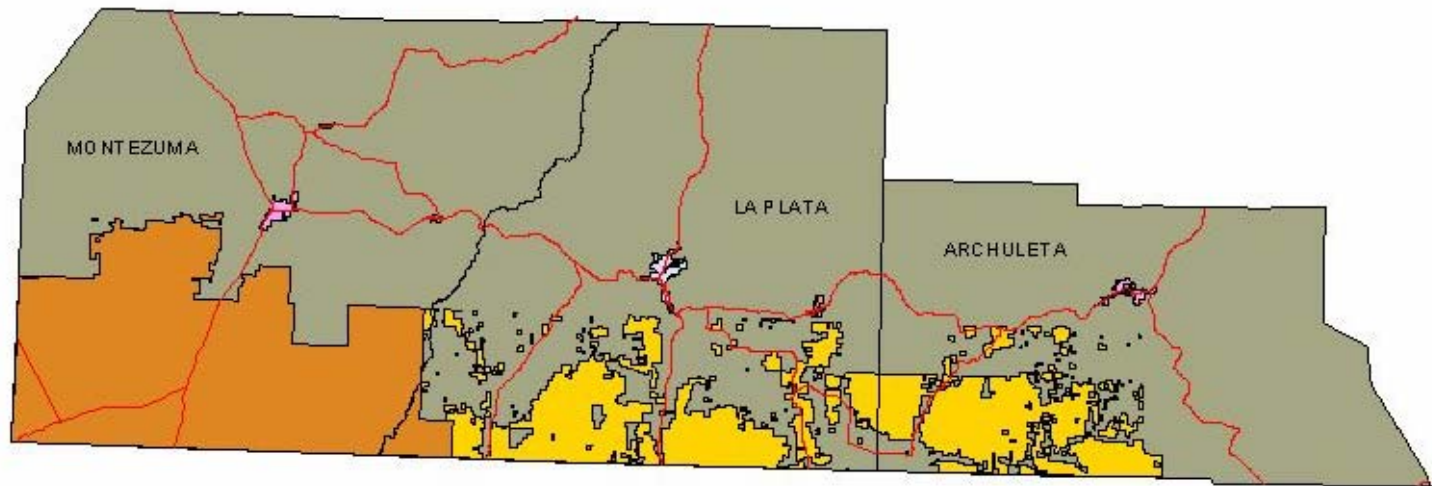


US 160 near the Four Corners

Options for Additional Funding

- Increase in the gas tax would be equitable, because it captures tourism travel.
- Impose a sales tax on fuel purchases.
- Energy producers should pay their own way.

Indian Reservations



SOUTHERN UTE INDIAN RESERVATION



UTE MOUNTAIN UTE INDIAN RESERVATION